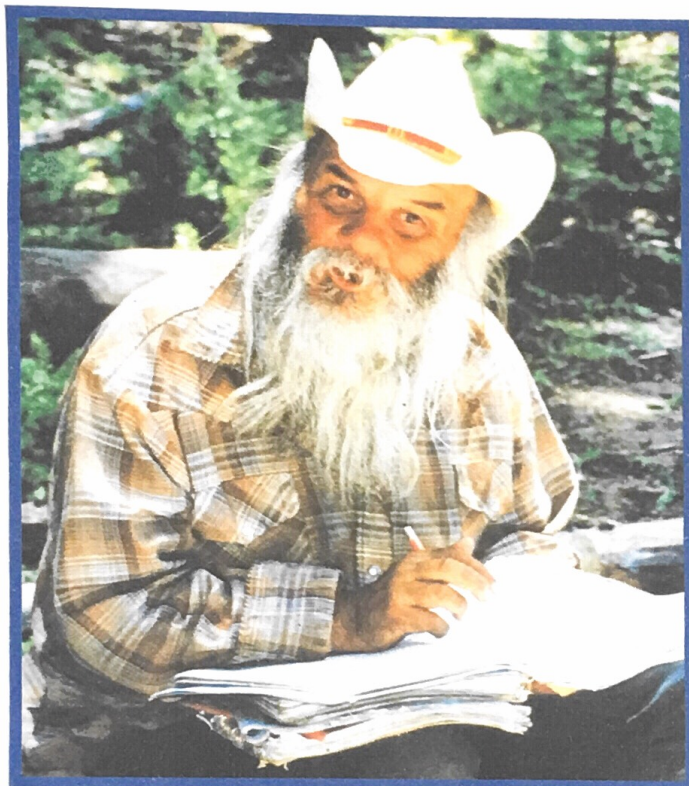


# Rainbow Family

## Life Stories



by Jodey Bateman.  
Interviews with Rainbow  
Family of Living Light  
folks conducted between  
1977 and 2008.

Scanned in 2018.  
Jodey Bateman may be  
contacted on Facebook.  
or [jodey.bateman@yahoo.com](mailto:jodey.bateman@yahoo.com)

08.c TISA - "Welcome Home, Hippie"

- interviewed in 1978 at the Oregon  
Gathering



[Tisa told me her story at the 1978 Oregon Gathering].

I was named Theresa and it came out Teese and I've been Tisa ever since. So I named myself when I was two years old and it still feels like a comfortable name for me.

I was born in 1938 in New York City. My father ran a restaurant for the aunt I was named after. When I was 4½ our family moved to Franklin, Tennessee. My father was a tobacco and warehouse man with his brother and his father.

My father was a loose Presbyterian and my mother was an agnostic. I went to Sunday School, but I grew up doubting it. My mother read to me from the Book of Tao when I was nine. She talked to me about Buddha and other religions. I never grew up with the standard Southern prejudices. My mother was a Bostonian - we spent our summers in Maine, so I got a lot of Yankee input. I grew up knowing that my family had come over on the Mayflower, so I knew my place in history. I went to an eastern prep school, then came back to Nashville and went to Vanderbilt. I was a senior there when the first sit-ins took place in Nashville. There was a lot of talk and discussion about sit-ins, but no influence in any more direct way.

I went to Europe for a year after college. Then I came back to Nashville and got my master's in library science. Then I worked in the Brooklyn Public Library. I felt very uncomfortable in Tennessee. It was never home to me. After two years in New York, I was dissatisfied, searching for I know not what, but I still felt that the United States ended at the Mississippi River. It never occurred to me to head west. And so I joined the Peace Corps and spent the next 2½ years in Tanzania. I was a librarian in Dar Es Salaam, the capital city, for a year.



Just being in Africa and talking to people there, when I said I was from the South, I got into raps with them about American racism. They asked me why it was, and I told them what I thought the historical reasons were. Dar Es Salaam was a cosmopolitan city. It had more embassies than any other capital in East Africa. There were a lot of Chinese in Tanzania. The American engineers had a contract to plan a railroad. The Chinese had a contract to build it. That sort of thing happened all the time abroad and Americans back home didn't know about it. The Chinese dressed my uniform, always went to restaurants in twos or threes, never talked to anybody at other tables like Americans. Americans are a lot more like Africans in that respect. Africans like us a lot better as people to play with and kick back. I had friends in Tanzania who had studied in China. I had a lovely love affair with a Russian. I taught up-country at a girls' school in the bush. It was a public boarding school. There were so few schools, the girls were drawn from a large area.

I got back to this country in April, 1967. I had a severe case of culture shock. Tanzania had been such a high, intense experience, yet for most of my friends, that part of my life didn't exist. I was very patriotic. In Tanzania I once threw a man out of my apartment that I thought was bad-mouthing the United States. Then, when I came back to the US, I found out that a lot of what Africans were saying was true. I realized when I came back that Americans were the most provincial people I had met - afraid of the stranger.

Intellectually I had always been a critic of American society. I was agnostic. I knew something was wrong. I didn't know what. In Africa, I realized what it was. America needed - warm, easy, caring people. Everybody in Tanzania called each other brother and sister. Children made a little curtsy to an elder, no matter how raggedy.

Pre-Peace Corps I wasn't politically active. I knew nothing about a subculture. I came back to the Beatles, the Jefferson Airplane, reports of San Francisco and the flower children.



(277)

TIME Magazine was running lead articles, "Marijuana, Good or Evil?" which piqued my curiosity. TIME magazine turned me on, I tried marijuana that year.

I floundered around most of that year in the states - worked for OEO Office of Economic Opportunity along with thousands of other returned Peace Corps volunteers. That was the time of Martin Luther King's death, the riots in Washington DC, with Marines on the White House steps. That was shocking to me. I got tear gassed by the cops or National Guard or whoever was keeping peace and order. The poor people came to Resurrection City. I was scared to go there, but I wasn't afraid to go to any section of Washington DC at the height of the riots to deliver food from the churches.

But SDS Students for a Democratic Society was too much for me. I wasn't prepared to go that far. I stayed glued to my radio during the whole Chicago trip. I couldn't believe that was coming down. I joined the Committee of Returned Volunteers, which was an anti-war group of returned Peace Corps people. Out of that I got involved in my first women's group. We got tired of just pouring coffee while the men in the committee gave their macho raps. We continued our women's group with anti-war work, but we also got into consciousness raising. I see within my sisters - no matter how much they may put down the women's liberation movement - it has affected all of them. And it hits a responsive chord in every woman.

So I was 30, unmarried, going through some weird spaces whether or not I intellectually believed it. I had all the stereotypes of an old maid. "At 30 you passed your peak. Ain't nobody gonna marry you." So I was questioning the whole position of women in my culture, the whole male-female relation, the whole marital relationship. My lover was an ex-Peace Corps friend. He called it quits, so I picked up and moved to San Francisco in late 1968. I arrived in San Francisco the night people barricaded Haight-Ashbury to keep the cops out. It was the last night of the Haight. I drove up to the barricades and split. I was blown away.



I was staying with some old Peace Corps friends. I smoked more dope in three days than I had up to then. I fell in love with San Francisco and wanted to be a hippie. I worked for the Hunter's Point branch of the San Francisco Public Library. I became lovers with Bob, another old Peace Corps friend. He was a frustrated young architect who was just letting his hair grow and getting into dope. We quit our jobs and for the next two and a half years we lived together and got into the craft trip. We did tie dyes. We did all the craft fairs. We became easy living, fashionable hippies.

Meanwhile I helped set up food co-ops and stayed active in women's groups.

This was my first and only living with a man relationship. I began working on myself, as was popular in those years, in encounter groups. Bob and I broke up and that was real heavy for me. We had started talking a lot about land in the country, communal living. It seemed like something I wanted to do. So when we broke up, I was looking to make some big changes in my life. I went to a month-long therapy workshop group—learned a whole lot about myself, which I'm still assimilating. And I moved to Humboldt County because the therapy group was based there. When I got to Yreka in Humboldt County, they were the people I could walk up to and ask for a hug. It had some of the elements of what I later found at the Rainbow Gathering.

I spent my first winter living with two men and a woman in a one-room cabin with funky plumbing and occasionally the roads blocked. We were a cast assembled like Sartre's No Exit. It was wonderful. Michael was a 28 year old gay veteran. We shared a loft. Kim was a 70's version of the score man on campus. He had a different young lady in his bed under the loft every night. Irene was 17 year old closet junkie who lived on brown rice and onions—funky beyond belief. We screamed at each other a lot, but we loved each other a lot, too.

Then I bought five acres of land—dense trees and brush. I built myself a house. I added onto an existing shack. It was supposed to be



temporary, but six years later [1978] I'm still polishing it. I heard about the Colorado Rainbow Gathering and almost went. I planned to hitch there, but I was scared away by the tales of highway patrols and blockades. I went up to Eugene, Oregon, to the Renaissance Fair and that was the first time I ever got to dance with no top on. Two friends had been to the Colorado Gathering and they were both so high, so blown out when they got back, that I immediately regretted that I hadn't gone.

I hitched to the Wyoming Gathering in 1973 on my own, not knowing what the hell I was getting into, but knowing that I had to be there. At the bottom of the last hill on the way to the gathering site was a funky little sign that said WELCOME HOME HIPPIE. I was so glad to be there, I started crying.

I didn't know a soul there. I fell in with a bunch of young college kids straight out of Ann Arbor, Michigan. I came reasonably ill-prepared. At least I had a sleeping bag. I ran into a couple of old friends, people to talk to, to refer back to.

The gathering wasn't all grand and wonderful. There was a conflict between two personalities, Barry and Patterson. I tend to stay out of controversies - that's not quite true. I was in Barry's crowd. Some of Patterson's group got arrested for going on the Indian reservation. None of our group did. We stayed in the national forest. No matter what the vision, our ideals are always compromised. I don't see things in absolutes.

I went through times of feeling all alone, of fears and paranoia about getting ripped off of my possessions and of not getting enough to eat. Now I come to gatherings not caring whether I eat or not and I get fed all the time. There were moments when I had to stand and look at the gathering from outside, interspersed with some of the highest encounters of my life. Like the OM circles blew me away.

My fear of not getting enough to eat led to me working in the kitchen. Dominic was running the kitchen that year and there were some really strong sisters working there. I stayed after the gathering to help with clean-up and the crowd got smaller and smaller. The gathering was the first time I ever said, "OK, Lord, I believe. Thy will be done. You clearly



got control of this movie," and gave up fighting it.

Finally at the end of the permit, the last day of cleanup, a group of about 50 of us moved to Sink's Canyon outside the camp ground. Although nobody called it that then, it was exactly the Peace Village kind of concept. We really, in the nights spent around the council fire, got down to knowing who each other were, sharing our heart songs. We wanted to set up the first Rainbow Caravan with really fine vehicles, like running on methane, and go around and do songs and dances at different places.

The stars in this movie included Dominic, Medicine Story—he was just Story then, Andy, Eric from Taos, Lynn, Gypsy, Sarra. It's interesting, I started naming most of the brothers first—then I got around to the sisters. The group got smaller as others split off, having other things they needed to do. We had a 60-passenger school bus we found in Atlantic City, Wyoming, a ghost town not far away. Barry and Sunny took off. We went to where Medicine Story had been living near Santa Cruz, California. We had some overhauling—gave the bus a never-completed paint job. It was titled "The Rainbow Rider."

From there the bus went to my place. I hitched home with Dominic earlier. The bus had picked up Jamie Georgia Peach—who had some knowledge of how to repair buses. He was from a poor white sharecropper family. He was a Vietnam vet, one of the most loving, beautiful brothers to dance through this lifetime. We had a good conversation about the South, comparing how we had seen it from our opposite ends of society. We also had Carl and Mary, a runaway couple age 15 and 14 respectively. Carl was a Makah Indian from Washington. Mary was the daughter of a computer programmer.

We went to the Yakima Valley of Washington to a funky little town called Buena—pronounced Bew-ay-na. We had a lot of Jerry-bolt repairs along the way and polished the art of sifting through dumpsters. We contracted with a farmer to pick his orchard and stayed for six



weeks until October 12, the day after my birthday. All I wanted for my birthday was to get the job over. It was really hard work. We had to get up at 4:30 a.m. in the wet, frost-tipped grass. Dominic tried to get together some kind of breakfast. We were cold. All we had were cast-off summer clothes from the gathering free box. Nights were the highest. We sat around the fire sharing our heart songs, giving each other massages, learning to love each other, seeing each other's strengths and weaknesses, working out the hassles.

At the end we had enough money to rebuild the bus engine. We ended up on the Summer Bourgers Commune near Albany, Oregon. They were building a 55-foot sailboat with a ferro-concrete hull. Our original agreement was that three or four of us would come to their commune to use their welding tools to rebuild our bus. The rest of us pitched a tipi near Deadwood, Oregon, out in the funky boonies. By this time, Dominic had brought two Indians who were cousins, Flaming Rainbow and Bob. They were mixed Arapaho and Sioux. I have the picture in my mind of Medicine Story holding the how-to book about tipis and we'd turn to these Indian boys and they didn't know any more than we did. But they got the tipi up with a massive group effort, facing east, which was up-hill. And being in Oregon in the fall, it began to rain, pouring down the hill. We dug drainage ditches around the tipi door, which more and more came to resemble a moat.

One by one we began finding good reasons why we should be helping with the bus at the Summer Bourgers. Finally the whole tipi venture was abandoned. The Summer Bourgers were swamped with 25 burned-out Rainbow Riders—cold, wet, miserable with runny noses. Ten of us were under age 20.

Fortunately the Summer Bourgers had a huge three-story dome where they lived and a fine sauna. We totally disrupted their lives and in the long run, they loved it. They sub-contracted to build barns around the countryside to make money to build their boat. We decided to have a crew of us build barns to make money for our bus. We lived in the bus and built a huge barn in Aberdeen, Washington, in the rains. That job took longer



than any the Summer Bourgeois had ever done, there were more mishaps and I hear the roof fell in a year later.

We got back to a glorious Thanksgiving Feast. The people back at the Summer Bourgeois had been saving it for three days and cooking more each day, waiting for us. What a blessing!

We pulled out in mid December headed for Arizona and sunshine and fruit picking. Jamie had rebuilt the bus engine while tripping. We were really excited. The bus made it down highway 101 to within five miles of my house and the engine blew. And there we all spent a wonderful, magical Christmas, sleeping 13 on a floor.

We had to come to grips with the fact we weren't together enough to keep the bus together. We were broke. We had spent all the money we had made. So the decision was, people were going to scatter to make money. Myself and two sisters, Lynn and Coleen, were left with the bus on our hands. We got it running and took it down to Coachella, California, where it spent the next year and a half in an organic orchard.

Lynn and I took off from there to Mexico and spent the next two months eating peaches and mellowing out, having a perfectly marvelous time. When we came back there were several people living on my land in various structures and from then on it's been a family there, even though only three of us from the original bus crew - me and Lynn and Andy - are still there with it.

I didn't go to the Utah Gathering or the Arkansas Gathering. I went to the Montana Gathering and had my faith renewed that it wasn't just a dream, it really was happening. And I've been a gathering junkie ever since. For me, the gathering is a re-charge, a re-connection, like having my vision in a crazy, wonderful way. I can get through the rest of the year, working and going to school, knowing that the Family is here, we are the Family and the Family is everywhere. I'm studying accounting. The Family is going to need an accountant.



283

I saw at the Oregon Gathering this year, Sonny's petition for nuclear disarmament, and leaping out at me was the signature of some young brother from Franklin, Tennessee, my old hometown. I can just hear him tell about the gathering "Wow! It was so high. Y'all won't believe it!"

I think we are working slowly toward a New Jerusalem - a Peace Village, not just a Peace Camp like we have now. We've negotiated with the Bureau of Land Management on higher levels than we have before.

There's a lot of bull shit in the original hippie philosophy and we're refining that philosophy in the Family, trying to make it better.